

Ceremony honors retiring Supreme Court Justice Ann Lamar

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Friends and colleagues of retiring Justice Ann H. Lamar expressed profound respect and admiration for her during a ceremony Thursday at the Mississippi Supreme Court.



Justice Jim Kitchens of Crystal Springs described her as a workhorse who often remained at the court into the evening and an influential jurist who wrote more majority opinions than anyone else on the court this past year.

“She has set the standard in so many ways for us,” Justice Kitchens said. “I think it is fair to say she gives more thought to her decisions than any other person I’ve served with,” he said. He called her “the most deliberative and conscientious person you can imagine. She has been ideal as a Supreme Court justice. I’ve learned so much from her.”

“All of us respect her,” Justice Kitchens said. “I can’t think of anybody who does not respect her for her integrity, for her diligence and for all the other good qualities she has, and there are many of them.”



Sen. W. Briggs Hopson III of Vicksburg, president of the Mississippi Bar, thanked Justice Lamar for her 32 years of public service, including 10 years on the Supreme Court. He noted that her opinions are always fair and balanced. “They seem to give clarity to complex situations,” Hopson said. “Justice Lamar has a way of making those difficult cases easy for us to understand and gives us guidance about how we should advise our clients in the future.”

“Justice Lamar is respected throughout the Capitol, respected in the legal community,” Hopson said. “She has promoted excellence in our profession as an attorney, and here as a jurist has promoted excellence in the administration of justice, and we are grateful for your contributions to the bar and to the people, the citizens of Mississippi for what you have done,” Hopson said.



Justice Dawn Beam, looking out at Justice Lamar’s family in the audience, said, “I’m just reminded of what an incredible sacrifice you have made to the state.”

Justice Lamar was accompanied at the ceremony by her mother, Bobbie Jean Hannaford; her husband, John T. Lamar Jr.; their two sons, Rep. John T. ‘Trey’ Lamar III and Vance Lamar; her sister Pat Day, her brother Eddy Hannaford; and two of three grandchildren. The youngest, granddaughter Annie, followed Justice Lamar as the justice introduced her family, and played with her ID badge at the reception.

Justice Lamar is the third woman to serve on the Mississippi Supreme Court. She noted that she had resigned herself to being the only woman during her tenure, until Justice Beam was appointed. She noted that one of the most frequent questions she gets when she does public speaking is “What’s it like to work with all



of those men?” She called her fellow justices brothers, prayer partners and dear friends. “They could not have been better or more accepting to me.”

“That’s what I’ve gotten to do my whole career,” she said. “I have lived and worked in a man’s world, but they have been good to me.”

Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. said, “You can be at the top of your profession and also be a wonderful wife, mother, daughter.”

Justice Lamar said that she had resolved years ago that “when I can’t do both, I’ll go home. The career is wonderful. I’ve enjoyed it. It’s been good, but it’s time to go home. Ten years on the road is a lot.”

“I know this is the right decision for me. It is the right decision for my family. They have been so patient with me through the years. They have supported me and been there for me when I needed them. I said many years ago, and I’ve said it many times, it is because they have been who they are, that I’m able to do what I do.”

The date of Justice retirement ceremony fell on the same day that the Supreme Court handed down a major addition to court rules, the Mississippi Rules of Criminal Procedure. Justice Lamar for the past six years oversaw the Supreme Court Rules Committee on Criminal Practice and Procedure, which drafted the comprehensive rules that address every aspect of criminal procedures from arrest through post-trial motions in all trial courts of the state. Justice Kitchens called it a testament to her leadership that the nine-member court was unanimous in its approval of the new rules

Chief Justice Waller thanked Justice Lamar for her service, and for her work on the criminal rules. “This will be a lasting mark on the jurisprudence of the state for years to come,” he said.

Justice Lamar also served as chair of the Board of Governors of the Mississippi Judicial College. The Judicial College trains and provides continuing legal education for judges and court staff throughout the state. Chancellor Cynthia Brewer of Madison County, who recently took over as chair of the Board of Governors, presented Justice Lamar with a plaque recognizing her service. “She is a person who not only worked her way through to the highest of our legal system,” Judge Brewer said. “She is a person who loved you during the difficult times.”

Former Justice Randy Pierce, director of the Judicial College, attempted to dispel any notion that working as an appellate judge was boring, noting the organization of a co-ed softball team and participation in non-wagering collegiate basketball pools. Justice Lamar won. Pierce presented her with a framed copy of her brackets.

The justices of the Supreme Court presented Justice Lamar with a plaque commemorating her 32 years of public service. “We wish you Godspeed and happiness in all that you do,” Presiding Justice Jess H. Dickinson said in making the presentation.

She’s been asked frequently over the past year about what comes next. Channeling Scarlett O’hara, she’s said that she would think about that in January. The time is almost here, and she’s not sure beyond that fact that she won’t be traveling to Jackson every week.

She repeated a favorite quotation: “No matter where you are, no matter what stage of life you’re in, God always has something in store for you.”

